

NEW PUBLICATIONS.

LAVELEYE'S PRIMITIVE PROPERTY.
PRIMITIVE PROPERTY. Translated from the French of EMMILE DE LAVELEYE, by G. R. L. MARRIOTT, LL.B., Svo., pp. 356. Macmillan & Co.

In this comprehensive treatise, by an eminent living economist of Belgium, the subject of property is considered exclusively in its historical relations, without reference to any abstract theory concerning its origin or validity, and showing that ownership has assumed various forms at different epochs of society, and consequently is susceptible of new developments with the progress of civilization. The purpose of the author is to furnish an historical sketch of the primitive forms of property, without deducing any conclusions as to the original right; a problem, in his opinion, which cannot be solved by reasonings from history. Because an institution has existed, even through a long succession of ages, it does not follow that it is just, or that it is worthy of indefinite perpetuation. Its existence, however, for many centuries indicates that it was adopted to human requirements during the time for which it was maintained. The primitive idea of property, moreover, as practiced by ancient societies, under the sway of a universal sentiment of natural justice, appears to the author to be in accordance with the feelings of equality and charity which are the cardinal principles of the Christian religion, and with the reforms in civil laws which seemed to be demanded by the development of the industrial organization.

The history of property, says M. Laveleye suggests that the forms of property cannot be subjected to any absolute rules. The most perfect order is not the same for savages and civilized nations. A system which in one place secures the greatest production and the most equitable distribution, may have different results elsewhere, and in that case is no longer right. The best form of property, at a given epoch, is to be learned from the study of man's nature and the consequences of his acts. "The equalizing movement which agitates modern society will probably end in obtaining new recognition of the natural right of property, and even a guarantee for its exercise, by means of institutions in harmony with the existing necessities of industry and the prescriptions of sovereign justice."

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